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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 000685

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TAGS: PREL PTER UNSC KPKO IS LE

SUBJECT: DPKO REJECTS ISRAELI CLAIMS OF NEW WEAPONS FLOWS
INTO SOUTH LEBANON

Classified By: Ambassador Jackie Sanders, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary. During UNSC consultations on UNIFIL's mandate on August 16, DPKO A/SYG Hedi Annabi acknowledged that the situation in south Lebanon had changed as a result of recent attacks against UNIFIL, but rejected Israeli claims of Hizballah refortification and illegal weapons transfers into UNIFIL's area of operations. He reported that UNIFIL plans to establish checkpoints along the Litani river soon that would be "co-located" with those of the LAF. Annabi decried Israeli overflights of Lebanon, Israel's refusal to provide the UN with strike data on its use of cluster bombs, and the lack of progress towards Israeli withdrawal from Ghajar. The new French PR promised to circulate a draft resolution within the next few days extending the mandate of the peacekeeping force and underscored the need, above all, to maintain unanimous Council support for UNIFIL. Most delegations supported the SYG's calls on Israel to end its overflights of Lebanon and to hand over cluster bomb data.
End Summary.

Annabi Refutes Israeli Charges

¶12. (C) Directly contradicting Israeli claims of Hizballah refortification and illegal weapons transfers into south Lebanon, Annabi told the Council that UNIFIL had found "no evidence" of new caches of illegal weapons in its area of operations. Although the attacks against UNIFIL had "changed the situation on the ground" and demonstrated that there are problems in south Lebanon, he implied that these weapons predated the July 2006 war and that the attackers came from outside the AOR. UNIFIL and the LAF had investigated all claims of unauthorized armed elements/weapons in south Lebanon, Annabi reported, but had so far found nothing. Nevertheless, he maintained that UNIFIL remained ready to investigate based on any "specific evidence" offered by Israel or other parties. During a meeting with troop contributors held just prior to Council consultations, Annabi insisted that UNIFIL does not have a Chapter VII mandate to conduct searches of buildings or private residences without specific evidence of intent to commit hostile acts. He said UNIFIL planned to establish checkpoints along the Litani river soon that would be "co-located" with those of the LAF.

¶13. (C) Turning to other issues related to UNSCR 1701 implementation, Annabi told the Council that Israel's continuing overflights of Lebanon caused unnecessary "friction," and noted that the SYG's repeated entreaties to Israel to stop this practice had gone unheeded. He reported that cluster bombs dropped by Israel in the last few days of the summer 2006 war had killed 21 people and injured 183 since the cessation of hostilities, including a French soldier serving in UNIFIL on July 25, and expressed regret that Israel had yet to turn over detailed strike data to aid in UN demining efforts. Reporting no progress on the temporary security arrangements for the northern part of

Ghajar, Annabi reminded the Council that Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon would not be complete until the issue of Ghajar is resolved. He informed the Council that planned withdrawals from UNIFIL's maritime task force would leave it 7-9 boats short of its desired strength, and appealed for contributions to make up this gap. During the meeting with troop contributors, only Indonesia announced its willingness to contribute 1-2 additional boats to the MTF.

P-3 Support UNIFIL

¶4. (C) While expressing strong support for UNIFIL's efforts to discharge its mandate, Amb Sanders noted that the attack against UNIFIL and the rocket attacks against Israel demonstrated that there are unauthorized armed elements and weapons in south Lebanon. She urged UNIFIL to redouble its efforts to address these threats, and in particular to quickly establish joint patrols and checkpoints along the Litani river. Amb Sanders reiterated deep concern about illegal weapons transfers into Lebanon and called for the immediate return of the two abducted Israeli soldiers. The UK warned against "complacency" in the effort to prevent illicit activity in the AOR. The new French PR, Jean-Maurice Ripert, expressing full support for UNIFIL, promised to circulate a draft resolution within the next few days extending the mandate of the peacekeeping force. He underscored the need, above all, to maintain unanimous Council support for UNIFIL. Recalling the death of the French soldier from cluster bombs in south Lebanon, Ripert also expressed concern that Israel had not given the UN detailed strike data yet.

Others Sound Familiar Themes

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¶5. (C) While most interventions focused largely on UNIFIL and the need to extend its mandate for one year, several delegations also briefly touched on other issues in UNSCR 1701 implementation. Nearly every delegation expressed concern about deaths from cluster bombs in south Lebanon and urged Israel to give the UN detailed strike data. Indonesia emphasized that the UNSC "must join" the SYG's call on Israel to provide this data, and said it did not understand why Israel had not already done so. Several delegations, including Italy, Belgium, and France, called on Israel to cease overflights of Lebanon. Most delegations also mentioned the lack of progress towards the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and Lebanese prisoners in Israel. Italy labeled the "failure to find a solution to the Sheba'a Farms" an issue of great concern, and expressed hope that the SYG would present proposals in this regard very soon. Italy and Russia also spoke at length about the need for political reconciliation and dialogue in Lebanon.

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